

INDEXICALITY OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IN YALEMSA E-COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

Muslims in the U.S is a minority group, thus, vulnerable to discrimination. Yale Moslem Students Association (YaleMSA) as a Muslim community on Campus provides Yale students with the opportunity to come together in a supportive Muslim environment and seeks to educate the Yale and New Haven communities about Islam (yalemsa.org). This article discusses how YaleMSA indexes Muslim identity in its emails and webpage communication and how the indexicality shows YaleMSA as an empowered Muslim community on campus. It applies the framework for identity analysis proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), especially principle (3) identities may be linguistically indexed through labels, implicatures, stances, styles, or linguistic structures and systems. The analysis of YaleMSA in-group e-mail communication (yalemsa@gmail.com) and in out-group webpage communication (yalemsa.org) during the 2008-2014 periods reveals that YaleMSA uses Arabic borrowings and expressions presupposing Muslim life to index its Muslim identity. The intensive use of Arabic borrowings in the in-group communication heightens the Islamic atmosphere and strengthens solidarity among members, while the use of Arabic borrowings in combination with English equivalent in out-group communication mitigates prejudice from different faith groups. The choice of overt labels "Muslim" and "non Muslim" rather than "Moslem" and "nonbeliever" implies YaleMSA's freedom to speak its own voice, and advocate for equal respect among different faith groups in Yale campus and New Haven community. The confidence in speaking its own voice and asserting an equal stance demonstrates that YaleMSA is an empowered Muslim community.

Keywords: *identity communication, in-group solidarity, linguistic markers, Muslim students, prejudice mitigation*

INTISARI

Umat Islam di Amerika Serikat merupakan kelompok minoritas sehingga rentan perlakuan diskriminatif. Yale Moslem Students Association (YaleMSA) berupaya menciptakan lingkungan yang kondusif bagi komunitas Muslim di Universitas Yale dan memberikan informasi yang benar mengenai Islam kepada civitas akademika Yale dan masyarakat New Haven (Yalemsa.org). Artikel ini membahas strategi YaleMSA dalam mengungkapkan identitas keislaman melalui komunikasi email maupun situs resmi, dan hubungan antara strategi yang digunakan dengan keberadaan YaleMSA sebagai komunitas Muslim yang berdaya di kampus. Analisis menerapkan kerangka Bucholtz dan Hall (2005) khususnya butir (3) yaitu identitas dapat diungkapkan melalui bahasa melalui penyebutan, pendirian, gaya, maupun struktur dan sistem bahasa. Data berupa ungkapan verbal diperoleh dari email YaleMSA sebagai komunikasi *in-group* (yalemsa@gmail.com) and laman situs resmi YaleMSA sebagai komunikasi *out-group* (yalemsa.org) selama periode 2008-2014. Hasil analisis

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memperlihatkan bahwa pengungkapan identitas keislaman oleh YaleMSA memanfaatkan kata-kata pinjaman bahasa Arab dan ungkapan-ungkapan yang menandakan kehidupan Muslim. Pemakaian kata-kata pinjaman bahasa Arab yang intensif di dalam komunikasi in-group membangun atmosfer keislaman dan memperkuat solidaritas antar anggota, sedangkan pemakaian kata-kata pinjaman bahasa Arab yang digabungkan dengan padanannya dalam bahasa Inggris di dalam komunikasi out-group dimaksudkan untuk mengurangi dampak prasangka negatif dari kelompok-kelompok agama yang lain. Penyebutan label “Muslim” dan “non Muslim”, bukannya “Moslem” dan “nonbeliever” mengindikasikan kebebasan YaleMSA untuk menyuarakan kata hatinya dan mendorong sikap saling menghormati di antara kelompok-kelompok yang berbeda agama di lingkungan Yale dan New Haven. Kepercayaan diri untuk menyuarakan kata hatinya dan menunjukkan kesetaraan membuktikan YaleMSA sebagai komunitas Muslim yang berdaya di kampus.

Kata kunci: mahasiswa Muslim, mitigasi prasangka negatif, solidaritas *in-group*, pemarkah linguistik, dan pengungkapan identitas.

INTRODUCTION

Pew Research Center releases in its 2015 report that Muslims in the United States number about 3 million, or 0.9% of the total U.S. population (pewforum.org). As a minority group, Muslims in the USA are vulnerable to unequal respect or other forms of discrimination, especially by the majority group. “There appears to be a growing tendency in the American Media to portray Arabs and Muslims as the consummate “other”, as terrorists, or more recently, as the enemy of all cherished western values.” (Haddad, 2004, based on several sources).

Previous researches on Muslims in the US have shown Muslims’ struggle for equality from the rest of Americans (see Shammas, 2015; Ali, 2008; and Peek, 2005). Shammas (2015) conducted focus group to obtain responses to explain why Arab and Muslim students might underreport discrimination on campus. The responses indicate evidences of discrimination against Arab and Muslim students on community college campuses in California and Michigan, whether expressed overtly or covertly by other students. To cope with discrimination, students congregate into same ethnic or same faith friendship groups to safeguard against marginalization and forge a connection to the larger campus community. Peek (2005) identifies three stages of religious identity development, i.e., religion as ascribed identity, religion as chosen identity, and religion as declared identity. She illustrates how religious identity emerges in social and historical context and demonstrates that its development is variable rather than static. She also shows how a crisis event such as September 11 can impel religious identity to become even

more central to an individual’s concept of self. Through asserting the primacy of their religious identity over other forms of social identity, religion became a powerful base of personal identification and collective association for young Muslims. Ali’s (2008) ethnographic research draws the patterns of acculturation by second-generation South Asian Muslims in New York City. He proposes that acculturation is a dynamic process, and that we can better understand variations in patterns of acculturation of individuals by looking at their peers—the kinds of intimate associations that individual make, and the kinds of peer group norms to which individual conforms.

These researches have shown how Muslims in the US deals with the issue of identity from political, psychological, and anthropological points of view. None includes the linguistic aspects in their discussion as a means of understanding Muslims’ status in the society. For instance, though observing that students congregate into same ethnic or same faith friendship groups to safeguard against marginalization and forge a connection to the larger campus community, Shammas (2015) does not show their linguistic behavior in strengthening solidarity among themselves and in forging a connection with other communities. While identifying stages of religious identity development, Peek (2005) does not reveal how identity at different stages is linguistically expressed by the group.

Religious identity expression takes different forms across social context. Religious practice, such as worship and dietary practices, takes place mostly within family and community contexts,

thus communicating one's religious identity to fellow Muslims. In addition, some Muslims also assert their religious identity in the public domain, such as when they support the role of religion in society and politics. In doing so, they communicate their religion to the wider society (Maliapaard and Phalet, 2015: 132-133). Bucholts and Hall (2005) 'propose a framework for the analysis of identity as produced in linguistic interaction, based on 5 principles: (1) identity is the product rather than the source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore is a social and cultural rather than primarily internal psychological phenomenon; (2) identities encompass macro-level demographic categories, temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles, and local, ethnographically emergent cultural positions; (3) identities may be linguistically indexed through labels, implicatures, stances, styles, or linguistic structures and systems; (4) identities are relationally constructed through several, often overlapping, aspects of the relationship between self and other, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice and authority/ delegitimacy; and (5) identity may be in part intentional, in part habitual and less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation, in part a construct of others' perceptions and representations, and in part an outcome of larger ideological processes and structures.' Bucholtz and Hall (2005) further elaborate that 'identity relations emerge in interaction through several related indexical processes, including: (a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding one's own or others' identity position; (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups.

The principle number (3), which is in line with Hymes' SPEAKING as a model of analysis to understand the underlying motive for the use of a particular linguistic structure rather than the others in a speech event, offers a theoretical framework to analyze how Muslim communities at Yale university helped shield Muslim students from a discriminatory campus and secure in their religion.

The data for analysis are verbal expressions in the YaleMSA's emails sent to yalemsa@gmail.com by the YaleMSA executive Board, and web-page (yalemsa.org) during the 2008-2014 periods.

YaleMSA community comprises mainly of non American-born migrants and international students. Their non-American origin are reflected in such names as Usama Qadri; Faez Syed; Harib Ezaldein; Tariq Mahmoud; Zenah Hasan; and Sana Samnani. The Coordinator of Muslim Life in the Chaplain's Office at Yale was born in Pakistan, emigrated to the United States at the age of three, and grew up in Upstate New York. (<http://yalemsa.org>)

In line with the Mission Statement (yalemsa.org), YaleMSA designs activities and events to help members socialize with Muslim brothers and sisters at Yale, to practice Islamic teachings in campus, as well to seek to educate the Yale and New Haven communities about Islam. They include Halal Dinner, Weekly Halaqa, General Body Meeting after Isha prayers, Jumuaah Prayers and Halal Lunch, Basketballaqas, and Weekly Halaqa on Tafsir and Qiyaam prayers. YaleMSA also holds Islamic Awareness Week with the purpose of better acquainting the campus community with the faith of its members. Also in the Spring every year it organizes the Critical Islamic Reflections (CIR) conference in sponsorship with other organizations (<http://yalemsa.org>). Information about all happenings for the members is circulated through the YaleMSA mailing list (in-group communication), while for the campus and New Haven communities is uploaded in the YaleMSA webpage (out-group communication). Both the in-group and the out-group communications are characterized by the use of Arabic borrowings and presupposition of Muslim life.

USE OF ARABIC BORROWINGS

The use of Arabic borrowings are quite dominant in YaleMSA communication. They are used individually, or sometimes in combination with English words. The ethnic background of both the executive boards and most members, which is Asian --as their names suggest, partly explains the use of various Arabic borrowings (Cf. Jaspal and Cyle in Jaspal, 2009:17). Those Arabic borrowings

can be categorized into (a) greeting and praise; (b) names of month in the Islamic calendar, Muslim figures (prophet, companions), sites, and activity for Muslims; (c) title for position or wish; and (4) specific terms. Mange et al. (2000) argue that lexical markers constitute an implicit manner for speakers to mark their discourse and a way for receivers to infer what group the speakers belongs to. Arabic borrowings, however, seems to be more familiar for Muslims with Asian background than Muslims with Western background.

The following table presents the Arabic borrowings used in YaleMSA e-mail communication. The writing is maintained as in the data.

and 'halaqa' - and Meccodysey (yalemsa@gmail.com/ Sunday, Nov 25, 2012).—from 'Mecca' and 'odyssey'. Basketball and odyssey are clearly not religious activities, but gain the religious sense with the addition of the words hallaqa and Mecca. The first blending, basketballaqas, indexes Muslim identity in that it suggests a special basketball game for muslims at Yale where they can keep wearing decent costumes while playing the game. A such circumstance makes those involved in the activity 'secure in their religion' (see Shammas, 2015) and 'helped shield Muslim students from a discriminatory campus' (Asmar via Shammas, 2015:9).

The second blending, Meccodysey, indexes

Tabel 1.
Arabic borrowings

No	Words	Meaning/equivalent	Category
1.	<i>Assalam Alaikum; salaam</i>	Peace be with you; peace	greeting
2.	<i>subhanAlloh</i>	Alloh is the Great	praise
3.	<i>Halal</i>	Lawful (allowed)	specific term
4.	<i>insyaAlloh (iA)</i>	If God permits	specific term
5.	<i>RA (Radhiyallahu 'anhu/'anha)</i>	Alloh is pleased with him/her	title for wish
6.	<i>SAAW (Shallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam)</i>	PbUH (Peace be upon him)	title for wish
7.	<i>halaqa</i>	Discussion circle	activity
8.	<i>Iftaar; suhoor</i>	Meal-eating activity during Ramadan	activity
9.	<i>Tafseer/tafsir</i>	Interpretation (of Qur'an)	activity
10.	<i>Dhu 'l Hijjah/Zul hijjah/Thul-Hijja; Ramadan</i>	The 11th month in the Islamic calendar	name of month
11.	<i>Eid Mubarak</i>	1st day after Ramadan	celebration
12.	<i>Eid al adha</i>	10th day of 11th month in the Islamic calendar	celebration
13.	<i>Musalla/Musallah</i>	Prayer room	place
14.	<i>Isha, jumuah, fajr</i>	name of 5 time prayer	activity
15.	<i>Khutbah; qiyaam</i>	Sermon; prayer	activity
16.	<i>Imam</i>	Master	Title

Arabic words combined with English form such phrases as *halal* dinner, *halal* BBQ, *halal* lunch, weekly *halaqa*, *Jumuah* prayer, *Isha* prayer, *tajwid* class, Annual *Eid* Banquet; *Eid al-Adha* program, *Musalla* Prayer Times, etc. are found throughout the data. Two blendings are found, i.e. basketballaqas (yalemsa@gmail.com/ Wednesday, December 3, 2008) -from the words 'basketball'

muslims identity, for Mecca is the first most important site in the Muslim world. A trip to Mecca is very likely for the purpose of performing the Muslim ritual, i.e., hajj or umrah. Non-Muslims may make a long journey to anywhere in the world, but they are definitely not allowed to enter the city of Mecca. Therefore, non-Muslims may chose any other cities than Mecca for their odyssey.

USE OF EXPRESSIONS PRESUPPOSING MUSLIM LIFE

In addition to Arabic borrowings, YaleMSA uses a number of expressions that presuppose Muslim life (see Table 2). These expressions are commonly used among Muslims as they are parts of Muslim's repertoire.

(a) **Overt mention of Muslim identity categories and labels.** YaleMSA refers itself explicitly as MSA (Muslim Students Association), and often addresses its members as Muslim members or MSA members. When referring to the Chaplain, it uses a longer phrase the Coordinator of Muslim Life at Yale instead of Chaplain. All these show overt mention of Muslim identity.

Table 2.
Words related to Muslim life.

No	Words	Meaning/equivalent	Category
1.	Coordinator of Muslim Life at Yale	Chaplain	title/occupation
2.	The mother of the believers	The Prophet's wife	honorific label
3.	The commentator of Qur'an	scholar	occupation
4.	The five time prayer	Worship	activity (ritual)
5.	Umrah trip	Pilgrimage	activity (ritual)
6.	Brother (Br.)/Sister	Mister (Mr.)/Miss (Ms)	title (address)

Different faith groups may talk about the same things, but they will likely use different expressions which the general society are more familiar with. For example, when referring to a particular person who are knowledgeable in the Qur'an, thus able to explain the meaning, non-Muslims will predictably choose a generic terminology 'scholar' rather than the comentator of Qur'an. Similarly, when referring to one's journey to Mecca for the purpose of Umrah, non Muslims may choose the more familiar terminology, i.e pilgrimage.

The discussion on the findings is divided in two sections. The first section focuses on how YaleMSA uses the Arabic borrowings and expressions presupposing Muslim life to index Muslim identity, and the second section on the evidence of YaleMSA as an empowered Muslim community on campus. In coherence with the theoretical framework, the first section is organized based on Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) indexical processes, which include (a) overt mention of Muslim identity categories and labels, (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding Muslim's own or others' identity position, (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles, and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with Muslim personas and groups.

The label "Muslim" has its synonym, i.e. "the believer", which also appears in YaleMSA communication in the expression of "the mother of all the believers" (yalemsa@gmail.com/Monday, Dec 1, 2008).

YaleMSA sometimes uses "non-Muslim" for members of different faith groups. "Non-Muslim" is a broad category for those embracing religions other than Islam. YaleMSA never uses "the unbeliever" or "nonbeliever" to refer to non-Muslim because the words means 'a person who does not believe' (Webster's College Dictionary, 1999) which potentially leads to a misunderstanding from other faith groups that YaleMSA disregards their faith.

(b) **implicatures and presuppositions regarding Muslim's own or others' identity position.** YaleMSA uses "Muslim" rather than "Moslem" in all YaleMSA communication. Using 'Muslim' in its discourses implies that YaleMSA wants to be identified with the name (identity) the Holy Quran uses for those who take the path of Islam. (See Mange et al, 2009:366 for using label to influence receivers' attitude). It presupposes the speaker's independence to speak his own voice not the other's. Other groups (non-Muslims) generally use "Moslem" in English discourses. It carries the pronunciation by the 'foreign' tongue, thus,

an imposition of English pronunciation.

The use of “Muslim” in YaleMSA in-group communication is perceived as a genuine form of self-naming that has the power to boost members’ self esteem. YaleMSA also consistently uses it in the out-group communication, implying an assertion of Muslim’s freedom from the power of other groups’ discourse. If, on the contrary, YaleMSA uses ‘moslem’ in the out-group communication, it will imply that YaleMSA lets the majority group keep seeing Muslims as a minority group, and it will bring less favourable effect to the effort to educate the Yale and New Haven communities about Islam as a religion that respects equality.

- (c) **displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles.** YaleMSA adopts different interactional footings in the in-group communication from the out-group communication. The use of “all persons, all paths” in the out-group communication (yalemsa@gmail.com/Wednesday, December 3, 2008) reveals YaleMSA positive attitude toward others that everyone regardless of his/her religion may share a special moment together at Yale, while at the same time it also shows YaleMSA’s awareness that religion is a sensitive issue. The use of “path” instead of “belief” or “religion” prevents YaleMSA from being prejudiced as an extremist group. In its webpage, the Mission Statement does not refer to the other groups as “non Muslim”, but “Yale and New Haven communities” instead. It shows that YaleMSA does not put others into a different category. YaleMSA regards those out-group communities as fellows YaleMSA needs to acquaint with Islam.

The topic of the talk in YaleMSA in-group communication reveals that YaleMSA never explicitly excludes other groups from participation. YaleMSA is aware that other groups may not join in the talk, but may always be by-standers. Although the topic is often Muslim-specific, such as “Significance of the 1st 10 Days of Zul-Hijjah” (yalemsa@gmail.com/Monday, Dec 1, 2008), none of the content items potentially hurts others. In

relevance with the ‘Participant’ and ‘End’ in Hymes’s SPEAKING, YaleMSA disseminates information that caters the need of its Muslim members, but it never speaks in an unpleasant tone (Key) that will potentially provokes its members to keep distance from other groups. As part of its Mission, Muslim members shall also be ready to share the topic of the talk with other groups but in a less specific manner than when they discuss it among themselves.

The following is a comparison of two data: one that do not explicitly exclude other groups.

Reminder: The Princeton Retreat is this weekend! Payment (For those who have registered) is due tonight! Info with transportation will be coming soon iA! (yalemsa@gmail.com/Tuesday, Sept 29, 2015):

The content of this Reminder does not index Muslim identity very obviously. However, the word *insyaAllah* (abbreviated into iA) at the end of the message indexes Muslim identity of the speaker, and consequently the target listeners. The word *insyaAlloh* is an Arabic borrowing meaning if Alloh permits, and is used by Muslim when making a promise or planning a future action.

Compare with the following remainder:

Just a reminder to join us for the Halal MSA Dinner in Commons Dining tonight @ 6 pm. Also, please note that there is no Wednesday Halaqa tonight because the Chaplain’s Office is screening “A Jihad for Love” @ 7 pm in the Whitney Humanities Center Auditorium.

(yalemsa@gmail.com/Thursday, November 13, 2008)

The content of this Reminder is clearly related to Muslim activities, i.e., *Halal MSA Dinner* and *Wednesday Halaqa*. *Halal* and *halaqa* are Arabic borrowings. The first is a term which means “lawful or allowed” and found in Islam only. The later means a gathering where Muslims share knowledge about Islamic teachings or experiences. Although the topic clearly indexes muslim identity of both the

speaker and the target audience, it remains to sound inclusive.

(d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with Muslim personas and groups. YaleMSA uses several linguistic markers to index Muslim identity in the forms of greeting (*Assalamu Alaikum* or *Assalam Aleikum* my fellow humans); Arabic borrowings for Islamic term (halal), Muslim activity (*halaqa*, *duaa*), praise (*subhanAllah*), and name of Muslim's God (*Allah*). Meanwhile, the out-group communication, though uses linguistic markers indexing Muslim identities, puts them in a less overt manner. They are: jumu'ah prayer services, halal lunches, halaqas (discussion circles), daily iftaar dinners, annual Eid Banquet, and Taraweeh prayers. The use of another covert term is, for example, 'congregational prayers' which means the 5 time prayers conducted in group.

YaleMSA created blendings, i.e., "basketballaqa" (yalemsa@gmail.com/Wednesday, December 3, 2008) and "Meccodysey" (yalemsa@gmail.com/ Sunday, Nov 25, 2012). Blending is common among general youth, thus it reflects youth identity; but the use of 'halaqah' in the blending indexes muslim identity. Similarly, *meccodysey* reveals muslim youth identity as it contains the word Mecca, the first important site for muslim where *Kaaba* locates.

"Brothers (and/or sisters)" as a term of address is found in a number of emails (e.g. yalemsa@gmail.com/Tuesday, Feb 10, 2009; yalemsa@gmail.com/ Monday, September 2, 2013). "Brother" shows solidarity and respect for a member of a religious community (see Rahman, 2012: 157). Though 'brother' is also used as a way of showing solidarity and a professional respect for the work of a colleague in different context and setting, the sense of Muslim identity is apparent. Another term of address to index Muslim identity is *Imam*, meaning a knowledgeable person in Islam, is used in yalemsa@gmail.com/Friday, March 6, 2009. The use of "The mother of all believers" for the Prophet's wife, and the titles "Saaw" for the Prophet and "Ra" for the Prophet's companions are all related to Muslim personas.

As stated in the Mission Statement, YaleMSA seeks to educate Yale and New Haven communities

about Islam. The out-group communication is, therefore, aimed at giving true fact about Islam to fight against stereotype. Communicating with others who might still hold prejudice toward Muslims needs careful choice of words that both index Muslim identity and prevent misperception toward Islam. This "strategic use of language, which is, metaphorically, choosing the right vessel to present information in a certain way in order to achieve a certain purpose" (Sutton via Collins and Clement, 2012:379) is a greatest challenge for YaleMSA. A careful choice of words is shown in the use of common expression such as 'informal discussion' instead of *halaqa* (yalemsa@gmail.com/Tuesday, November 2, 2010) in order to avoid too specific terminology that may be suspicious to other faith groups,

World Fellows Meet & Greet
(Thursday, November 4th, 8:00 pm in Pierson Fellows Lounge)

Join us next Thursday, November 4th, at 7:30pm in the Pierson Fellows Lounge for an **informal discussion** with this year's three Muslim World Fellows. Aziz Royesh (Afghanistan), Arif Zamhari (Indonesia) and Fares Mabrouk (Tunisia) will be talking about their work outside of Yale and will be happy to answer any questions that you bring. To learn more about these amazing individuals, please take a look at their bios here. (yalemsa@gmail.com/Tuesday, November 2, 2010)

A synonymous expression 'discussion circle' is used in other data as the closest correspondence for 'halaqa'. Yale and New Haven community must be familiar with the nature of discussion forums, so they will be prevented from confusion that may arouse suspicion toward YaleMSA activity. YaleMSA also makes the implicit explicit as another strategy to minimize prejudice from other groups. For instance, in the webpage, YaleMSA add the word 'prayer' to *Taraweeh* (to become *Taraweeh* prayer) in order take make the implicit meaning "prayer performed in the evening of Ramadan" explicit. Similarly, *iftaar* carries the meaning 'dinner', but it also needs to be added

with ‘dinner’ (to become *iftaar* dinner). Choosing a more commonly used word is another strategy in *Eid banquet*. It is an annual event to celebrate Eid with a dinner party inviting Muslims and non-Muslims. The word choice helps people to recognize the activity as a non ritual one, but at the same time prevents people from assuming it to be a noisy party with drinks, musics and dances.

Giving positive impression through its out-group communication is crucial for YaleMSA to win understanding from other groups which, in turn, brings equal respect. YaleMSA’s effort to give positive impression is achieved through a careful choice of words, i.e., minimizing the use of Arabic borrowings or replacing them with their equivalents. Collins and Clement (2012:383) posit that what a speaker says reflects on how that speaker is perceived by recipients. This communication strategy suggests that YaleMSA is aware of the other groups’ prejudice against Muslims.

When the use of Arabic borrowings is inevitable, YaleMSA avoids a straightforward way as in the in-group communication, in regards to the following two reasons. First, the audience do not share the knowledge about Islam, demanding elaboration on any specific terminology used in the communication. The use of Arabic borrowings may be responded with ignorance as the words make no sense for them. Second, the use of Arabic borrowings may lead different faith groups to frame Muslims as Arabs, thus confirming the existing stereotype that Muslims are Arab. Such stereotyping is disadvantageous for not only YaleMSA members who are from non-Arab countries, but also YaleMSA community in general. The confidence to fight against stereotyping has positive correlation with empowerment that this article now turns.

YALE MSA AS AN EMPOWERED MUSLIM COMMUNITY ON CAMPUS

Shammas (2015:5) observes that MSA members seemed more empowered than their non-member Muslim counterparts because they appeared secure in their religion and made a dedicated effort to educate non-Muslims about Islam. Similarly, YaleMSA has some outreach programs to educate Yale and New

Haven communities. The following discussion, however, is not on YaleMSA outreach programs, rather on how YaleMSA persuades non-Muslims’ participation as evidences for being an empowered Muslim community on campus.

One of the regular events hold by YaleMSA is *Interfaith Day of Service* which invites everyone regardless of faith. In the following email (yalemsa@gmail.com/Wednesday, December 3, 2008) YaleMSA uses the expression “Everyone is welcome. All persons, all paths” which shows warmth towards different faith groups. The metaphor “paths” for faiths or religions makes the expression more appealing due to its neutrality. At the same time, it implies that YaleMSA regards members of any faith group to share the same feeling of sympathy toward the needy, and that Muslims care for people in need regardless of their religion.

Interfaith Day of Service Friday, December 5th 2:00-5:00 PM

Meet at the Chaplain’s Office to assemble hospitality kits for homeless families.

Everyone is welcome. All persons, all paths!

For questions, contact [...] (yalemsa@gmail.com/Wednesday, December 3, 2008 10)

Another out-reach event that also invites different faith group to join is The Annual Eid Banquet (yalemsa@gmail.com/Tuesday, November 2, 2010). Here, YaleMSA mentions “celebrate the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha and its Abrahamic connections” to highlight the fact that some different faith groups have connection with Islam through Abraham. YaleMSA implies that prejudice against Islam is not fair because different faith groups which are free from prejudice are, in fact, connected to Islam. The message should be clear: Let there be prejudice against all faith group, or let there be no prejudice at all.

The Chaplain’s Office and Yale Muslim Students Association present:

THE ANNUAL EID BANQUET

The Chaplain's Office and the Yale Muslim Students Association cordially invite you to attend our new Eid Banquet. As Ramadan recedes into the summer and out of the academic year, we have transformed our traditional Ramadan Banquet into an "Eid Banquet," which will celebrate the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha and its Abrahamic connections. The new banquet will be at Commons Dining Hall on Wednesday, November 17, 2010 at 5:30 pm. We would love for you to attend and join us in our celebration!
(yalemsa@gmail.com/Tuesday, November 2, 2010)

These data have shown that YaleMSA has the confidence to assert equality among all groups in the society (all paths are equal) and connection between Islam and other faiths. Having strong confidence to fight against stereotyping or other forms of discrimination is an evidence that YaleMSA is an empowered Muslim community in campus.

CONCLUSION

YaleMSA uses Arabic borrowings and expressions presupposing Muslim life to index Muslim identity in its e-mail and web-page communication. Arabic borrowings are salient markers of Muslim identity, which appear more frequently in the in-group communication as all the participants share the same faith. On the other hand, much less markers of Muslim identity are used in the out-group communication which involves participants of different faiths. YaleMSA carefully selects words to index Muslim identity in the out-group communication in order to prevent prejudice from other groups, thus achieving mutual understanding and equality.

Based on the findings from the data analysis, overt markers to index YaleMSA's Muslim identity strengthen the solidarity among Muslim members, while covert markers to index YaleMSA's Muslim identity mitigate prejudice from different faith groups. The use of 'Muslim' rather than "Moslem" and highlighting the fact that other faiths are also related to Islam show that YaleMSA has shown strong confidence to fight against stereotyping or

discrimination. The confidence in speaking its own voice demonstrates that YaleMSA is an empowered muslim community on campus.

The findings suggest that Arabic borrowing becomes markers (salient variants which are socially significant) not just an indicator (variants with little or no social message attached) of Muslim identity. However, since the use of Arabic borrowings by Muslim group can also be used by other different faith groups to confirm their negative stereotyping against Muslim, Arabic borrowing needs to be used properly according to the Setting and Participants in order to successfully achieve the desired End.

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